

Free the Pill

It's time for over-the-counter birth control pills: The movement to free the pill!

Each of us should have the freedom to make decisions about our own bodies and lives with dignity and respect. Birth control pills are an essential part of the full range of sexual and reproductive health care, and are one of the best-studied medicines on the market today. However, there are many barriers to getting birth control pills, including having to obtain a prescription from a health care provider, that disproportionately impact specific communities due to systemic inequities in our health care system. Birth control pills should be available over the counter (OTC), fully covered by insurance, priced affordably, and made available to people of all ages to ensure more equitable access.

A movement to free the pill

Free the Pill, operated by [Ibis Reproductive Health](#), is a campaign to educate and engage in support of over-the-counter birth control pills in the United States that are affordable, fully covered by insurance, and available to people of all ages. Campaign activities are driven by a coalition of more than 150 reproductive health, rights, and justice organizations, research and advocacy groups, youth activists, health care providers, prominent medical and health professional associations, and other professionals, who have been working since 2004 to build the evidence in support of OTC birth control pills in the United States. The coalition is committed to centering the leadership of those who face the greatest barriers to contraceptive care and who would benefit the most from easier access to birth control pills, including people of color and Indigenous peoples, young people, immigrants, LGBTQ+ folks, and those working to make ends meet.

Barriers to access

Despite 60+ years of proven safety and effectiveness, people still face barriers to getting birth control pills. Research shows that the current prescription status makes it harder to [obtain](#) and [consistently use](#) them. Barriers to birth control pills fall harder on people of color and Indigenous peoples, young people, immigrants, LGBTQ+ folks, and those working to make ends meet. These barriers include, but are not limited to:

- Not having a regular health care provider
- Having to make or wait to get an appointment to see a provider
- Time away from school or work to visit a provider and the cost of the visit
- Transportation to a health care provider and the pharmacy
- Lack of insurance coverage or high retail prices
- Parental consent for seeing a health care provider and obtaining a prescription

Many of these barriers would be eliminated or significantly reduced if birth control pills were available OTC, priced affordably, fully covered by insurance, and accessible to people of all ages.

Over-the-counter birth control pills as a solution

[Decades of research](#) and experience show that birth control pills are safe and effective for OTC use, and making them available OTC would help bridge gaps in access and allow people to make decisions about their health and lives. Over-the-counter access might sound revolutionary, but birth control pills are already available without a prescription in over 100 countries, including [Mexico](#) and [the United Kingdom](#). OTC birth control pills are also widely supported by the general public as well as major medical organizations and associations including the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#) and the [American Medical Association](#).

In 2022, we anticipate that the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will review the very first application to make a birth control pill over the counter in the country. This presents a groundbreaking opportunity to expand contraceptive access to communities who face the greatest barriers. Policymakers must allow the FDA to conduct the review process based on evidence and benefits to public health.

Over-the-counter birth control pills have the potential to give people greater control over their lives and reproductive health, and can reduce barriers to care.

It's time to free the pill!

Now more than ever, it's time for over-the-counter birth control pills that are fully covered by insurance, priced affordably, and available to people of all ages. Free the Pill is committed to leading this movement with reproductive justice values and a [youth-adult partnership approach](#) that centers those most affected by barriers to obtaining contraceptive care. Join our movement to help drive awareness for OTC pills and demand a future where everyone has the resources they need to make decisions about their lives with dignity and respect!